Report No. 1.—The Tailoring Industry.

As the manufacturing industry employing the greatest number of hands, and moreover, as the one popularly supposed to be more open to abuse than any other, and also as embracing greater variety in the circumstances under which work is executed, tailoring was selected as the first industry regarding which inquiry should be made. This inquiry has been of the most searching character, no detail being omitted, and no available source of information neglected. Whenever necessary assistance was sought from employers, from workers, and from the labour organisations or their officers. This has in most cases been freely afforded, and it is believed that nothing of material consequence within the knowledge of the persons and bodies mentioned has escaped attention.

The method of carrying on the tailoring trade in Sydney presents some striking peculiarities. The factory system has not yet assumed large dimensions, by far the greater portion of the work being done by "outside" or home-workers, who form a much more numerous class than the "indoor" or factory hands. The conditions of the homeworkers was therefore looked upon as of equal importance with that of the factory hands, and received a considerable share of attention.

Under the heading of Clothing Factories are included—(1), the large establishments in which "slop" clothing is made wholesale; (2) the workshops in connection with retail businesses in which most of the work is done to measure for the order trade; and (3) private residences where many hands are engaged on order, slop, or contract work.

Accommodation.

In the principal factories the accommodation provided for the workers is as exhibited in the following table, from which a fairly correct idea may be formed of the amount of care and attention bestowed thereon:—

	Fair.	Inferior.	Bad.		Fair.	Inferior.	Bad.
Cubic space	13	5	0	Approach	15	3	0
Floor space	13	5	0	Sanitary arrangements	18	0	0
Ventilation	13	5	0	Light	12	6	0
Cleanliness	15	3	0				

The trade is carried on principally in the upper storeys of retail houses and stores, where many appliances and arrangements needful for the comfort of the workers are wanting. In five factories out of eighteen inspected the workers are unduly crowded; in three the premises are dilapidated and dirty; in five the ventilation is unsatisfactory, and in most the keeping of stoves for pressing operations in rooms where many hands are working all day long is the cause of much discomfort. In six establishments the workers are under great disadvantage owing to the deficiency of light in their workrooms. In other respects sanitary arrangements in factories are fairly good, though privacy and convenience demand more attention than they receive in some cases.

A highly objectionable feature is the entire absence of any precaution against fire, no provision being found in any factory either for the prevention or extinction of fire, or for the escape of the employees in case of danger.

In workshops attached to retail businesses the accommodation is generally inferior to that in factories, and the information regarding them may be summarised as follows:—

	Fair.	Inferior.	Bad.	Very Bad.		Fair.	Inferior.	Bad.	Very Bad.
Cubic space	23	19	1	0	Approach	19	17	5	2
Floor space	23	19	1	0	Sanitary arrangements	25	15	0	3
Ventilation	19	20	4	0	Light	28	15	0	0
Cleanliness	19	18	5	1					

It is believed that these forty-three workshops, employing about 1,300 hands, of whom nearly 900 are women, fairly represent the different types to be found in Sydney. As a rule, the accommodation provided is inadequate, in regard to both ventilation and sanitary conveniences. At one place, where five men and twenty women are at work, there is only one small closet for general use; and the same undesirable state of things exists in another case, while in a third the sanitary conveniences are in connection with a large arcade, where the closets for both sexes adjoin, and are only separated by a corrugated iron fence 6 feet high, and open at the top. In two other instances the closets used by female workers are common to all the other occupants of the buildings to which they are attached, wherein many businesses, employing a large number of persons of each sex, are carried on. Unfortunately, as the law stands, it is impossible to compel owners or occupiers of premises unprovided with suitable conveniences to remedy the defect; and as the causes of complaint have in most cases existed for a long time, it is vain to expect that they will be remedied by the voluntary action of the parties concerned, who, for the most part, think their duty to their workpeople extends no further than the payment of their wages.

As in the larger factories, so in these workshops, no attempt is made in any case to supply facilities for the prevention, extinction, or escape from fire, although in large shops some degree of security may be found in the appliances provided for the protection of their retail branches. Some of the approaches to the workshops are dark and dingy, the stairways rickety, and lighted by gas during the day, and so steep and narrow as to be practically useless as a means of escape in the event of panic arising from an alarm of fire. In factories and workshops alike the absence of precautions against fire is a matter of the greatest importance, demanding immediate attention. Although in a few instances the ventilation is sufficiently good to keep the workrooms tolerably cool, in most the temperature is often uncomfortably and unhealthily high in the summer, and no means are provided for supplying warmth in winter. For the greater comfort of the workers some reform in these respects is urgently required.

The clothing trade has grown very rapidly, and has now expanded far beyond the capacity of the existing accommodation. Of all the factories examined only one has been built especially for the trade, and the arrangement and necessary conveniences are therefore more or less faulty throughout. In connection with "order" shops, the accommodation is, generally speaking, bad, those doing the better class of business providing, as a rule, the poorest housing for their employees. Amongst the small, low class shops, the accommodation being almost everywhere bad, descriptions of a few may serve as examples of the many; one for instance is an establishment comprising a small shop with equally small premises attached. The workroom in which a few girls are employed is not unlike a loft in appearance, having a sloping

sloping corrugated iron roof, destitute of any intervening ceiling to protect the inmates from the heat of the sun. This workroom is approached by a steep stair terminating in a trap-like opening. Another shop consists of a narrow space from 15 feet to 20 feet long by 5 feet wide. Originally it was an open passage way between two buildings, along which the drainage was carried off. The space has been roofed in with glass, and forms the workroom for six girls and one man. A third workshop is situated in a back yard, barely raised above the level of the wet and muddy ground, and too closely surrounded by other buildings to admit the free circulation of pure air. Another is a barn-like structure, in every respect unsuited to female workers.

Division of Labour.

During recent years the trade has undergone many changes, and a marked tendency is now apparent to divide the numerous processes in the manufacture of clothing into distinct crafts. Formerly a beginner was not considered to have mastered the trade until able to make, not only the whole of a single garment, but every part of an entire suit. The number of workers now reckoned "complete" in any one article is comparatively small, and a coat, vest, or pair of trousers, before being finished, must generally pass through the hands of four or five persons. This division of labour is naturally most complete in the large slop factories, where the different classes of workers are close together, and the least time is lost in passing the work from one to another. The greater number of "complete" hands belong to the class of home-workers, although not a few are found among those who work in order shops.

As this division of labour is yet only in the transition stage, great difficulty has been experienced in arranging schedules of wages and prices paid for piecework. There exists also much confusion of terms used in the trade, the work of a "machinist" or "finisher" in one shop differing from that of workers under similar titles in another, while both may differ from outside hands passing under the same designations. This confusion of terms adds to the difficulty of accurate classification of work and the earnings of workers.

Classification of Work.

The manufacture of clothing comprises three main classes of work:—

(1.) The ordinary slop clothing found in all soft goods stores.
(2.) Uniforms and clothing for public services made under contract with the Government.
(3.) Clothing made to measure for the order trade.

Rates of Payment.

Slop clothing is made almost entirely by machinery, and the rates of payment are consequently low. A great deal of the work is of the roughest description, and the hands employed upon it the least qualified by skill and experience. Government contract work is also mostly done by machinery, but the quality of the material as well as the workmanship is better and commands higher pay than slop work. In the order trade the range of quality and workmanship is great, varying with the standing of the business and the character of its connection. With this range in the class of the work and the quality of the material there is necessarily considerable variation in the rates of payment, but there is no great difference in the prices paid for work of the same class by different employers. As a general rule factory indoor hands are on weekly wages, home-workers and order hands are paid by the piece. Cutters, pressers, improvers, and apprentices are usually weekly hands, but it is sometimes the practice to include pressing in the work to be done "by the piece." It is also sometimes customary for workers to find their own sewing cotton, thread, and silk, and this rule is general with regard to home-workers and order hands, the employers occasionally buying the thread wholesale and retailing it, as far as can be judged, at wholesale rates. Cotton and thread for trouser making costs from 1d. to 1½d. per pair.

The large factories are employed chiefly in the manufacture of the class of wearing apparel called "slops," which maintains a vigorous struggle for the command of the local market with goods of a similar kind imported from England and elsewhere. The strength of the English made goods lies wholly in their cheapness, that of the local production in greater suitability in shape and make to local taste. To gratify this it is found that purchasers are willing to pay for clothing made here, from 10 to 15 per cent. above the price of English goods of the same class. When the cost of cutting, trimming, and putting together bears a high proportion to the total value, as is the case with goods of the cheapest class, the importer commands the market, but when the material is of higher value the proportionate cost of labour diminishes and the local manufacture is able to hold its ground against the imported article so long as the difference in value does not exceed the margin above mentioned. The following tables show the relative cost of labour in London and Sydney in making a pair of trousers, (1) requiring 2½ yards of cloth at 1s. per yard, and (2) the same quantity at 3s. 6d. per yard, with the addition of 12½ per cent. to the value for import and other charges.

(1.) Cost in London—	s.	d.	Cost in Sydney—	s.	d.
2½ yards cloth at 1s.	2	6	2½ yards cloth at 1s.	2	6
Making up	1	4	Import expenses		4
	3	10		2	10
Add import expenses, say		5½	Making up	2	3
Price in Sydney	4	3½	Price in Sydney	5	1

(2.) Cost in London—	s.	d.	Cost in Sydney—	s.	d.
2½ yards cloth at 3s. 6d.	8	9	2½ yards cloth at 3s. 6d.	8	9
Making up	1	6	Import expenses	1	1
	10	3		9	10
Import expenses	1	3½	Making up	2	6
Price in Sydney	11	6½	Price in Sydney	12	4

The difference between the two values in the first case is about 20 per cent., but in the second only about 8 per cent, while the cost of labour compared with that of the product delivered in Sydney, is:—

(1)—In London 31 per cent.; in Sydney 44¼ per cent. (2)—In London 13 per cent.; in Sydney 20¼ per cent.

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The cost of labour is from 75 to 100 per cent. greater in Sydney than in England, the amounts paid for making the same kind of clothing being as follows :—

	Cost of making in London.				Cost of making in Sydney.			
	s.	d.		s. d.	s.	d.		s. d.
Sac coats	2	6	to	3 6	6	6	to	7 0
Tweed trousers	1	2	„	1 6	1	9	„	2 6
Tweeds suits	5	6	„	6 6	10	6	„	12 6

When the price of the locally made clothing is more than 15 per cent. above that of the imported article, the question of cheapness overrides that of taste, and the imported goods are preferred. But when the material is of better quality and higher value, the cost of locally made goods can be kept within the margin named, and the local manufacturer can successfully compete with the importer. The duty to be levied under the new tariff on woollens will, however, somewhat modify these figures. For instance, the sale price of the London-made article given above as 4s. 3½d. will be raised to 4s. 8¾d., and the locally-manufactured clothing will cost 5s. 4½d. instead of 5s. 1d., thus reducing the margin between the imported and home-made goods to 13¾ per cent., as compared with 20 per cent., the previous difference; similarly with the higher-class article—clothes which formerly cost 11s. 6½d. and 12s. 4d. will now probably realise 12s. 8¼d. and 13s. 3¾d. respectively, reducing the difference from 8 per cent. to 4½ per cent., and consequently bringing the cheap goods manufactured in the Colony within the purchaser's 15 per cent. margin of preference, the more costly goods being already within this preference before the imposition of the tariff.

Earnings.

There is very great difficulty in arriving at an estimate of the actual earnings of the different grades of workers in the different classes of work, especially when it is found that payments are calculated on different scales in different establishments, and the extras, allowances, and variations to be considered are almost endless. In the slop trade the rates paid depend upon a number of small particulars affecting each class of clothing, and there are at least four classes of ordinary slop trousers, and three of coats and vests, while "boys" and "youths" still further multiply the varieties. Exclusive of cutting and pressing, the rates paid for piece work are approximately as follows :—

	s.	d.	
Coats.—Sac, stitched, from	2	6	each.
„ bound	3	9	„
Walking	7	6	„
Overcoats	5	0	„
Trousers—No. 1,	7	0	per dozen.
No. 2,	10	0	„
No. 3,	13	0	„
No. 4,	18	0	„

	s.	d.	
Trousers—Youths	13	0	per dozen.
Boys	7	0	„
Vests (exclusive of buttons and buttonholes.)			
No. 1,	8	0	„
No. 2,	12	0	„
No. 3,	18	0	„
Youths	12	0	„
Boys	9	0	„

The maximum payment for No. 4 trousers has been stated at 30s. per dozen, but very little slop clothing at this rate is manufactured, and 20s. per dozen may be taken as an outside estimate of the rate paid for this class of goods. The highest rate paid for making vests is also said to be 30s. per dozen, but it is very seldom that any firm pays more than 18s. per dozen for bound, and 13s. for stitched vests. In coats there is a wide margin for "extras," but not much "slop" work is to be found at more than 4s. 6d. each, bound, and 3s. 9d. stitched.

The wages for factory hands, paid by the week, can be much more easily arrived at. The rates paid are as follows :—

Cutters	from 40s.	to 100s.	per week.
Trimmers	„ 30s.	„ 70s.	„
Pressers	„ 35s.	„ 80s.	„
Deliverers	„ 60s.	„ 70s.	„
Examiners	„ 60s.	„ 65s.	„
Machinists	„ 45s.	„ 80s.	„
„ (fem.)	„ 15s.	„ 40s.	„
Finishers	„ 18s.	„ 40s.	„

Improvers	from 7s. 6d.	to 17s. 6d.	per week,
Apprentices	„ 2s. 6d.	to 10s.	„
Buttonhole hands—			
Machinists and Finishers	M. ... from 17s. 6d.	to 40s.	„
	F. ... „ 12s. 6d.	„ 25s.	„
Complete (manual labour)	from 25s.	to 55s.	„

The range covered by these figures is very great, corresponding with the range in skill and experience possessed by the hands and in the class of work they are called upon to perform.

In the "order" trade work by the piece is paid at the following rates :—

Coats (exclusive of cutting)	from 7s. to 39s. each.
Vests „	„ 4s. 6d. to 10s. each.
Trousers „	„ 3s. 3d. to 13s. 9d. per pair.

A great deal of work is done at much lower prices under the name of "order" goods which are really more of a "slop" character. The above figures, however, can be taken only as the merest generalities, as there are almost endless variations in time, and consequently in the remuneration, required for making any garment affected by the taste of purchasers, which is not a matter that can be reduced within the limits of set rules. The rates of wages among indoor workers in factories, do not fluctuate very much, and the wages of outside workers who have followed the same avocation for a number of years have varied but little. A woman of ordinary skill can make an "order" coat in about twelve hours, a vest or pair of trousers in seven hours, and the average earnings of inside hands in the order trade will be about equal to those of the best workers in slop factories.

Information has been obtained in respect to nearly half the hands employed in order shops, and it would appear that during the past twelve months their average earnings have been £2 12s. for every week, or portion of a week, worked. This average gives for a person in full employment £135 a year. Unfortunately, in regard to the very important point of the amount of compulsory idleness which tailors engaged in the order trade have to submit to, the information is very conflicting; the executive officers of the union assert that the term of enforced idleness is not less than twenty-two weeks in the year, while the employers maintain that this period does not amount to more than six weeks, other idle time being voluntary or due to sickness. In the opinion of the agents employed in this inquiry, the time which an ordinary hand, willing to work, is compelled to remain unemployed is somewhere about eight weeks in the year, so that the earnings during twelve months amount to £114, which, distributed over the whole period, gives—instead of a possible £2 12s.—a weekly rate of

£2 4s. This last-mentioned sum happens also to be the average earnings of all the tailors working for more than half the year, regarding whom particulars have been received. In connection with the question of average earnings, it is proper to remark that the amount stated (£2 12s.) does not represent the actual sum earned by any considerable body of men. There are many men who with every opportunity do not earn more than £2 a week in ordinary hours, while on the other hand the number is by no means small whose weekly earnings rarely fall below £3 10s.

Hours of Labour.

The hours of labour generally observed in factories are about 8¼ per day on five days, and 4½ on Saturday, overtime being paid at the rate of pay and a half. During the busy season, just before Christmas, many factories work overtime at these rates, but the period is of short duration. The employees in factories usually begin work at 8·30 or 9 a.m., the interval allowed for dinner being three quarters of an hour. In most of the order shops the hours worked are 8½ per day for five days and 6 on Saturdays, making a total of 48½ hours per week; but pieceworkers are permitted to complete at home work not finished within ordinary hours, but receive no more than the ordinary rate; in this way about 2½ hours per week more are worked, making an average of 51 hours per week altogether. Cutters, trimmers, and pressers are seldom required to work overtime, and on such occasions receive regular overtime pay. Very long hours are not the rule in the trade, except among certain classes of outside workers, in reference to some of whom it is stated that, in the neighbourhood of Surry Hills, Goulburn and Foveaux Streets, the machines may be heard all night long, and sometimes even on Sundays.

Fines, &c.

The custom of inflicting fines for breaches of rules, so common in other parts of the world, does not obtain in Sydney. All work is examined by a person appointed for the purpose, and, if not passed by him, is returned to the worker to be amended. In most cases the worker is fairly and sensibly treated, but it is alleged, and perhaps with good reason, that some masters use their power of rejection as a means of defrauding their employees—an abuse which, however, does not seem to prevail to any great extent.

Earnings of Home-workers.

The earnings of home-workers was one of the questions dealt with in the present inquiry upon which a large share of attention was bestowed. A considerable mass of evidence has been obtained, from which may be formed a tolerably accurate estimate of the amount a person of average skill may earn by working only the ordinary hours of the trade. The home-workers are for the most part women, from whose statements of the rates paid for the different classes and kinds of work, and from the time allowed by experienced hands as sufficient for doing such work, it is estimated that their earnings throughout the year average from 20s. to 22s. 6d. per week. In this average are included many whose earnings fall far below, as well as those whose weekly wages greatly exceed that amount.

The rate of pay for home-workers does not greatly differ from the sum needed by a single girl of that class to maintain herself in moderate comfort. A woman with a family to support must work at the same prices as a single girl of equal skill and reliability. The same rule obtains in factories and shops, where no one ever receives higher wages for any reason independent of the work to be done. A woman may have aged parents dependent upon her, or by the death or sickness of her husband may be suddenly called upon to provide food, clothing, and shelter for a family of young children, but she will be able to obtain no higher pay than a single girl possessing equal qualifications in regard to the work, and with no wants or desires to satisfy except her own. Even when she can secure the best paid work it is everywhere plain that the woman who has others dependent upon her can earn in reasonable hours no more than will be barely sufficient for her most pressing wants. The result is what might naturally have been expected. Women who have families to support, finding themselves unable to earn sufficient for their needs in factory hours, do not seek factory work, but devote themselves to outside piecework, and, as they themselves express it, work late and early to make ends meet. When it is remembered that the earnings average 4½d. per hour there will be little difficulty in estimating what working "late and early" may mean to a woman with a family of four or five depending upon her, especially as she may be subjected to continual interruption by reason of the demands of her domestic duties, and has necessarily to lose several hours every week in receiving and returning work. To earn thirty shillings, about the smallest sum capable of supporting with decency herself and a family of four, she may be compelled to work 12 or 14 hours a day in addition to the time devoted to her household affairs.

The best and most reliable among the workers can earn from 30s. to 40s. per week, but there are others, and by far the greater number, whose earnings range from 10s. to 15s. per week. This disparity arises from the existence of a great number of unqualified and incompetent workers, who rove about from factory to workshop, and finally gravitate into the ranks of the poorest paid home-workers, or into the employ of the lowest class of sub-contractors. That so many incompetent hands should be employed in the trade is accounted for by the absence of any regular system of apprenticeship, many girls seeking to make a living as tailoresses who have never undergone any proper training to fit them for the work.

The tendency to a minimum wage already resulting from the existence of this large body of incompetent workers, is still further aggravated by the competition of women not wholly dependent upon their own earnings. For example, there are numerous cases where married women whose husbands earn fair wages seek to increase their incomes by tailoring work, and it is by this class that the minimum price for piecework is most frequently accepted.

Outside Workers.

In addition to the number of homeworkers with whom the factories and workshops have dealings, there is another larger class of outside workers who maintain themselves by assisting home-workers, or by working for sub-contractors. The wholesale soft goods houses, which supply the retail shops with ready-made clothing and other goods, are the chief patrons of the factories. The cloth supplied by them is first cut to measure by the factory cutter, and then distributed to the various workers, indoor and out, who make up the goods. It is the custom for the factories to deal with only a small number of the outside hands

hands, for, though some hands themselves complete the work they receive, many of the workers are responsible for much more than they actually perform. In the homes of the persons responsible to the factory small companies of tailoresses, ranging in number from two to twelve or more, work together, either on co-operative principles, or on weekly wages, or as apprentices to the chief workers. In most instances the chief worker is a woman, and the work done is taken on sub-contract.

This system has many objectionable features, and is obviously open to very grave abuses, natural results in most cases of the conditions which require that work shall always leave something in every hand it passes through. But the stoppage of outside work, if it were possible, while it would cure some of these evils, would also shut out from employment, or at least greatly inconvenience, many deserving workers, particularly women with young families or other helpless dependents upon their labours.

Sweating.

Though the clothing trade is by no means free from abuses, it is, so far as can be ascertained, free from the grinding down of the workers, which has made tailoring a by-word in other parts of the world. Rumours of the prevalence of "sweating" in Sydney have been both plentiful and persistent, and their substantial truth has been avouched by apparently trustworthy persons. When tested, however, their assertions were found to be based on mere hearsay evidence, and, though the names and addresses of some few so-called sweaters were given, the accusations have not been sustained by the evidence obtainable. To get at the truth no pains were spared. Domiciliary visits were made to houses pointed out as "homes of the sweaters, where the hands are kept at work all night long," and to factories where "children of tender years are employed," but revealed nothing to substantiate the charges. Polish and other Jews in particular have been frequently denounced as the greatest offenders, but, though employed in the trade in large numbers, they are for the most part respectable workers, the charges against them being utterly unjust and without foundation. The persons employed by the Jewish tailors are rarely of the nationality of their masters, being of the same class as those finding employment in the ordinary shops of the city; and their wages and hours of labour will compare not unfavourably with those of their fellow-workers in more pretentious establishments. Visits were paid to eighteen so-called Jewish sweating-dens, and it was found that, in addition to the proprietors, there were employed therein some seventy-two hands,—twenty-one males and fifty-one females,—all engaged in tailoring. Seven of the males and fourteen of the females were apprentices, whose wages ranged from 2s. 6d. to 15s. per week, according to their skill and length of service; the average being 7s. 9d. for boys and 9s. 2d. for girls. The wages of the men varied between 25s. and 80s. per week, the general average being 51s. The women, other than apprentices, receive from 15s. to 45s. per week, and the average wage for all employed is 24s. 6d. per week. In the majority of cases the hours are on five days from 9 till 6, with the usual interval for dinner, while in one or two instances work begins at 8 o'clock; on Saturday work is suspended at 1 o'clock, but proprietors admitted that in cases of urgency jobs on hand would not be laid aside until 3, 4, or even 5 o'clock in the afternoon. In most cases the proprietors and their wives do not profess to be themselves bound by any regular hours, indeed it is probable they occasionally work far into the night if they have urgent work on hand, and the click of the machines betraying the fact that work goes on during the whole night is no unaccustomed sound in certain localities, but inquiry disclosed nothing worse than a man, his wife, with now and then a hired assistant, working against time to finish garments wanted in a hurry.

The system of sub-letting, shown by this inquiry to be the one mainly in operation here, is doubtless the cause of a great part of what has been said about sweating. In common parlance, the term "sweating" is understood to mean the practice of taking contracts by middlemen, who sublet them at a price so low that the unfortunates who do the work are compelled to toil for extremely long hours to make a scanty livelihood. But though most of the factories are practically sub-contractors, such a system of cutting down prices is almost non-existent here, and few instances have been found in which the hands are prejudiced, or where those most deeply interested express dissatisfaction. This last-mentioned circumstance, however, proves nothing, since it is from the victims of oppression that opposition to reform generally proceeds.

In cases where work goes on throughout the night or for many hours with little intermission, it is certain that such a press of work is preceded and followed by slack times. If an order is required at short notice extraordinary hours are worked to finish it in time, but the mean duration of daily labour throughout the year is not excessive; and there is no question of the coercion of the workers, who are tolerably independent of control, and whose overtime is entirely optional.

It is very difficult to define exactly the term "sweating" as used in the trade and by the public, but if the definition given to the London Board of Trade is accepted, and sweating is considered to be "a system under which sub-contractors undertake to do work in their own houses or small workshops, and employ others to do it, making a profit for themselves by the difference between the contract prices and the wages they pay their assistants," it is obvious that many will be included who are perfectly innocent of any suspicion of sweating, unless it is assumed that the sub-letting of a contract cannot be consistent with fair wages and perfect justice to the workers. When a contract passes from one intermediate agent to another the first may fairly be said to sweat the contract for his profit, but the last, who makes profit by cutting down the wages of the workers, is "the sweater" in the language of the trade. In London the investigation of this subject was resisted and opposed by the sweaters and their victims alike, both parties regarding the inspectors who conducted the inquiry as their common enemy. It may well be that a similar prejudice has exerted its influence here also, but though many workers, particularly women, suffer great hardships, and their wages are often lower than they should be, it is impossible to admit the existence in Sydney of any abuse approaching the conditions prevailing in London and elsewhere. Sanitary and other conveniences are frequently deficient, sometimes even very bad, but there are no "dens" or "hot-beds of infection" like those spoken of in connection with the London sweating atrocities.

Employment of Children.

On account of rumours, and even definite assertions, that many children of unlawful age were employed in factories and workshops, particular attention has been directed to the matter, and every effort made to test the truth of these and other statements, but nothing confirmative has in any case been discovered. On several occasions young girls, apparently not more than 12 or 13 years old, were questioned on the point, and all except one gave their age at over 14 years. These children were apprentices, some of whom are doubtless under 14 years of age, but the number is certainly small.

Morality.

With regard to the specific charge of immorality which has been alleged against tailoresses as a class, the evidence proves that it is entirely without foundation, and that their standard of morality is as high as that of the rest of the community. This is a pleasing circumstance, seeing that dangers of an exceptional character assail them, especially in connection with the sanitary arrangements of many workshops, which, not being such as to encourage modesty or self-respect, afford many opportunities to those so disposed to take advantage of them.

Other abuses in connection with the trade have been alleged to exist, but the evidence elicited by this inquiry has failed to substantiate them.

Wages and Piecework.

The impression prevailing that workers engaged by the week have an advantage in wages over those who work by the piece is based upon the supposition that the rates are governed by different principles, whereas the fact is that under both systems the rate is fixed by the same principle, and daywork and piecework are merely different methods of buying and selling given quantities of labour. Hence, in the tailoring trade, whilst it is customary to pay by the piece those who take work to be done in their own time or at their own homes, and by the week those who work in factories, yet both classes of workers will in all cases earn the same amount in the same time if they are equal in all other respects. Under existing circumstances piecework is a necessity here, because the room available in factories is not equal to the accommodation of one-third of the hands employed, and, in the absence of any law regulating workshops, the conditions of work for outside hands are likely to be preferable to those of the ordinary factory.

Apprenticeship.

By the Act 8 Victoria No. 2 children over 12 years of age may be bound in apprenticeship to "any householder, tradesman, or other person exercising any art, mystery, or manual occupation," but in the clothing trade, so far as young girls are concerned, this Act is not taken advantage of. In some few cases girls are legally bound for a fixed period to learn some special branch of tailoring, but as a general rule between masters and their so-called apprentices there is no agreement other than a verbal one, and this is broken as easily as it is made. The number of such apprentices in order shops runs from two to six, and in the slop factories there are often more, from 13 to 15 years of age, who sometimes receive no pay for the first three or six months, sometimes 2s. 6d. per week, gradually rising to 10s. in about two years. The only branch of tailoring regularly taught is the making of coats, which may be learnt thoroughly in from two to three years. It is a common thing for a young girl to go to a factory for a few weeks as an apprentice, and then, though by no means qualified, to seek elsewhere a position as improver, often accepting wages below the current rates for improvers, but higher than those paid during the early days of apprenticeship. Wandering from shop to shop, and picking up a more or less imperfect knowledge of the trade in this precarious way, such girls usually become home-workers' incompetent assistants, working for low wages because they have not qualified for full rates. Workers and employers alike admit the magnitude of the evil, but, in the absence of any provision against the employment of young children not legally apprenticed, there is no way to overcome their rooted objection to submit to the irksome restraints of indenture for a fixed period.

The deficient supply of competent workers, as well as the superabundance of those at best but poorly qualified, is a serious disadvantage to the clothing trade, directly traceable to the want of a proper system of apprenticeship. To the same cause is due the unjust practice of some employers of keeping young girls on a very small wage long after they deserve more, and dismissing them if they ask for an increase. On both sides the system is abused, and the need for reform is becoming urgent.

General Remarks.

Though suffering at certain times from slackness, and, especially on the approach of Christmas, from over-pressure, employment in the clothing trade is fairly constant throughout the year, a large number of hands being kept in steady work by the Government contracts alone. In dull seasons some slop factories keep their hands employed on order work for country stores, distributing it among the most competent workers, the less efficient ones mostly suffering from lack of employment at such times.

The provision of separate workrooms is a very necessary reform, which might easily be effected. Workrooms common to both sexes, where long hours are spent in any sedentary occupation, are at all times most objectionable, for though whilst work is going on good order may be maintained, when discipline is relaxed during the interval allowed for dinner, the conduct especially of the males is too frequently offensive. In some of the large factories this difficulty is met by setting apart a large room for the use of the female employees during the dinner hour, an arrangement which should be enforced wherever practicable.

In these days of labour unions the clothing trade is of course not without its own organisations. In connection with different branches of the industry there are four unions: The Cutters' and Trimmers' Union, with forty-three members; the Amalgamated Journeyman Tailors' Association, with 350 members; the Tailoresses' Union, and the Pressers' Union.

APPENDIX A.

Slop Trade.

Number of Establishment.	Number in Factory.			Number of Establishment.	Number of Factory.			Number of Establishment.	Number of Factory.		
	Male.	Female.	Total.		Male.	Female.	Total.		Male.	Female.	Total.
1	13	59	72	7	20	20	40	13	14	40	54
2	2	12	14	8	4	18	22	14	20	30	50
3	12	35	47	9	3	50	53	15	13	27	40
4	14	48	62	10	15	30	45	16	5	38	43
5	10	50	60	11	3	25	28	17	3	20	23
6	8	16	24	12	1	12	13	18	1	11	12

APPENDIX B.

Order Trade.

Number of Establishment.	Number in Factory.			Number of Establishment.	Number in Factory.			Number of Establishment.	Number of Factory.		
	Male.	Female.	Total.		Male.	Female.	Total.		Male.	Female.	Total.
1	3	12	15	16	6	18	24	31	2	6	8
2	4	42	46	17	4	15	19	32	1	5	6
3	.....	6	6	18	4	14	18	33	5	10	15
4	.....	29	29	19	7	30	37	34	10	15	25
5	12	.. ...	12	20	6	16	22	35	1	2	3
6	2	16	18	21	4	13	17	36	1	8	9
7	4	60	64	22	2	12	14	37	1	9	10
8	70	80	150	23	2	5	7	38	...	4	4
9	68	180	248	24	2	10	12	39	50	...	50
10	9	65	74	25	1	5	6	40	18	...	18
11	6	6	12	26	3	17	20	41	11	...	11
12	5	20	25	27	2	6	8	42	40	22	62
13	6	15	21	28	4	6	10	43	...	7	7
14	15	45	60	29	3	7	10				
15	5	35	40	30	2	3	5				